Nixon says Vietnam fall should have been prevented

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COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — Former President Richard M. Nixon believes the United States should not have permitted the fall of South Vietnam to the Communists and that as an unfettered president he could have prevented it, says a former top Nixon aide.

Harry S. Dent, now an attorney here, said Wednesday that Nixon made the comments in a recent hour-long telephone conversation.

Dent, chief political adviser to the former president from 1968 until Deember 1972, said Nixon called him unexpectedly to talk about politics and the subject of Vietnam came up.

"I commented on the former president's decisiveness and strong action, with which I agree 100 per cent, in dealing with the Vietnam problem and in his quest for world peace," Dent said.

"I told him that if his administration had continued, the South Vietnamese government would not have collapsed. He emphatically agreed with that, but he was not being critical of President Ford's handling of the situation," Dent said.

Dent said that in reference to Watergate Nixon told him that in his heavy involvement at the time with problems in Vietnam and in his personal quest for world peace with trips to China and Russia "he let some things slip past him.

"I got the impression he was briefly and quickly bemoaning the fact he had not tended to the store at home as well because of his deep interest in foreign affairs and national security."